

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

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Serving Nature & You



Vantage Point

Finding the Balance

Do you ever find yourself wondering how much is enough or when enough may be too much? Resolving these issues can be quite a balancing act. As a resource management agency, the Missouri Department of Conservation is often faced with questions like these when making decisions about the state's fish, forest and wildlife resources.

How many trees per acre make a good forest? The answer to that question depends on many factors. What types of trees are being produced? Is the land public or private? Is the objective marketable timber or increased wildlife cover? It reminds me of the old cliché, "Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees!"

Managing Missouri's water resources can be equally challenging. Too many fish in a body of water causes increased competition for food and stunted growth, while not enough fish will decrease one's potential to provide meat for the frying pan.

Biologists, researchers and land managers are not only walking the tightrope of resource dynamics but also public opinion. A good example comes to mind that illustrates the complexity of balancing science and public tolerance.

The issue is the management and control of resident urban Canada geese.

In Missouri, the resident Canada goose population (the geese that don't migrate) is strong. In fact, population estimates for 2006 put Canada goose numbers at more than 60,000 birds, which is double the estimated number of just 13 years ago. While we consider the Canada goose management plan a success, high numbers of these birds often cause problems where they come in conflict with human populations.

Complaints from urban centers, where hunting is often not allowed, are common as Canada geese congregate on subdivision lakes and golf courses and in city parks. Most complaints revolve around the droppings generated by a flock of geese, but others include being chased by geese, water quality issues and additional dangers, such as geese living near an airport.

The Missouri Department of Conservation is very active in helping citizens deal with wildlife issues. We try to resolve human/wildlife conflicts utilizing nonlethal control when possible. We provide technical



CLIFF WHITE

advice and literature on all known, proven methods for discouraging geese from becoming established in an area. These methods include habitat manipulation, various harassment techniques, trained dogs, egg oiling, and repellents. Not all control techniques are practical at any given site, and no single control method or combination of methods is successful 100 percent of the time. Because of this, lethal control methods sometimes become necessary to reduce or maintain a local population to an acceptable level.

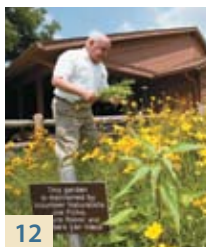
Lethal control usually comes in the form of a round-up-and-removal effort, after an entity meets minimum requirements to be considered for a special permit. Geese captured during a roundup are processed for human consumption and distributed to needy families in Missouri by local food pantries. While the Missouri Department of Conservation is mandated to administer the permitting process, the costs associated with conducting roundups and processing is the responsibility of the requesting party.

Everyone seems to realize the value of wildlife in Missouri, not only from an economic standpoint but an aesthetic one as well. When wildlife becomes an issue, we often find ourselves weighing that value. Finding the balance is not always easy. Although philosophies and opinions may differ, rest assured that the Missouri Department of Conservation is dedicated in our efforts to bring about a balance that serves the state's wild resources and Missouri's citizens.

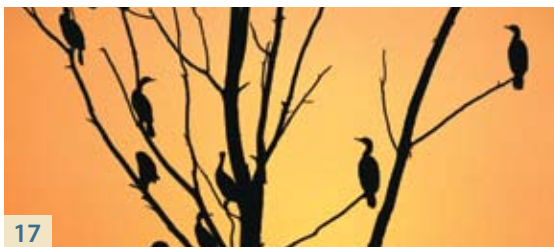
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WAHOO!

Finally, our mysterious trees have a name—Wahoo ["I found this Plant..." May 2006]. For the past couple of years, we have kept an eye on these interesting trees in the wooded area next to our home. I noticed this spring that there were numerous seedlings, so I transplanted some around our yard for us to enjoy even more. Visitors would ask what kind of tree these were and I could only explain what they looked like when they flowered and produced fruits. Now I have an answer.

Sean & Leann Langton, Otterville

MORE THAN FREE FISHING

Thank you for an outstanding magazine. We have been receiving it for the last five years and have learned much from it.

We were so pleased to read in the June issue about the Free Fishing Weekend, June 10–11. My two teenage daughters and I took my husband to

Little Prairie Conservation Area near St. James. What a beautiful area, and Lake Towell was clean and had a boat ramp, fishing dock and lots of picnic areas.

We had a super day fishing, but to get my teenagers out fishing with us was the highlight of our day. Thank you for the idea.

Virginia Applegate, Rolla

ANGLERS' RESOURCE

I read the article, "Catching Big River Blues" in the June 2006 issue. I go fishing all the time with my family and friends, and I am always after the big fish. I hope your advice will help me out.

Every time I read your magazine, I turn right to the fishing articles. I enjoy everything from ecology to fishing spots and techniques. I have learned a lot from the *Missouri Conservationist*.

David Boll, St. Louis

WHAT GOES AROUND...

Your interesting article on box turtles

["Box Turtles and People," July 2006] mentioned a study of 1700 turtles, the oldest of which lived to 59 years old. My cousin, Rainey Woody, carved the date and his initials into a turtle he found in 1913 near Meta. Sixty-five years later, in 1978, he found the same turtle with the initials and date still visible. A picture of Rainey and his "terrapien" appears in *A Pictorial History, Maries County*.

Kimberly Parker, Jefferson City

Editor's note: A Pictorial History, Maries County MO, Volume 1, 1989 is available from the Historical Society of Maries County. For more information, contact them at P. O. Box 289, Vienna, Missouri 65582 or www.rootsweb.com/~momaries/marihiso.htm.

A LITTLE COURTESY, PLEASE

I am writing in regard to the "Agent's Notebook," on etiquette [July 2006] and floaters on our Missouri streams, by Michael Lancaster.

I grew up on the Meramec River in Crawford County in the 1950s. Floaters were rare in those days. When we did see floaters, they were usually so courteous we couldn't believe it. You rarely heard them coming and only noticed them as they neared you. Today is such a different story, and like Mr. Lancaster, I believe there should be a book titled *Proper Etiquette While Floating* to present to those who float our streams.

We now live in Phelps County on MO Hwy 68, which is the route a lot of folks take to the "scenic riverways" down south of us. I can tell you those "obnoxious floaters" start partying way before they get to the rivers. We've had them stop on the highway, urinate towards our home, pull into our driveways to vomit or change drivers. I even had one ask to use our bathroom! And they don't think twice about throwing trash out for us to pick up. Somehow I don't see that we'd get away with that type of behavior if we drove into the city and



A BASK BEFORE BATHING

As a thunderstorm approached, Aaron Bass of Poplar Bluff caught this eastern collared lizard lounging in the lichen on top of Stegall Mountain at Peck Ranch Conservation Area located in Carter and Shannon counties. Though these lizards spend a great deal of time basking, they are quick to take cover if approached. The males' bright colors become more pronounced in May and June during the breeding season. Both males and females have two dark-colored lines across the neck, producing a "collar." They are found throughout most of the Ozarks and glades of the St. Francois Mountains.

stopped in some of their driveways. I wonder how long it would take them to call the police?

We've seen firsthand some very rude, obnoxious behavior. Indecent acts, loud music and obscene language are just the tip of the iceberg. As a result, we rarely go to any of our streams, and that makes me sad. We would love to take our grandchildren camping on the stretch of Meramec where I grew up, but it is too dangerous. So

they don't get to enjoy that late night gurgling of the river, or watching the campfire burn low, or the early morning sunrise and absolute stillness that comes with it. Not to mention some of the best fishing I've ever enjoyed!

Maybe we should start at the beginning and make certain "parents are parenting" and providing proper etiquette and none of it would be a problem on our riverways or in our driveways.

Mary Norris, St. James

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q: I just enjoyed eating my first blue catfish. Why doesn't MDC suggest private lake owners stock them instead of channel catfish? The blues filet easier and taste much better than channels.

A: I don't think I'll weigh in on the taste issue as, judging from the fish-eaters at our house, this a fairly subjective matter which is sure to generate debate.

I visited with a coworker in our Fisheries Division who explained that channel catfish are faster growing, adapt better to smaller waters and are a little more hearty than blue catfish. Also, channel catfish are more readily available for stocking. MDC recommends a balanced ratio of largemouth bass, channel catfish and bluegill for the optimum fishery situation in small impoundments. Largemouth bass serve as top predator and keep the ratio in balance. Blue cats also have the potential to become a top-line predator. In a pond situation, you'd have both black bass and blue catfish at the top of the food chain, making fish management more complex.

Blue cats are a large-water fish. They do best in Missouri's biggest rivers, and they are a favorite of catfish anglers at Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks.

Large channel catfish are sometimes mistakenly thought to be small blue catfish. The anal fin provides a good method of identification; channel catfish have 24-29 rays while blue catfish have 30-35 rays and a straight margin.

For more information on catfish, please see www.missouriconservation.org/conmag/2003/07/10.htm or contact the MDC Distribution Center, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180 or e-mail pubstaff@mdc.mo.gov and ask for the Know Missouri's Catfish wallet card and/or the 36-inch stick-on catfish ruler.

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ken.Drenon@mdc.mo.gov.

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“The Firsts”

Our most memorable hunts stay with us, especially when shared with family.



by David Urich, illustrations by David Besenger

I had just crawled up into my tree stand for my first deer hunt in Missouri. I had recently moved to the state to start a career with the Department of Conservation, and I had never hunted deer from a tree stand.

As I settled into the stand, I opened up a granola bar. Granola bars had come a long way because they used to be nasty, hard and uninviting snacks. This one happened to be chocolate-covered, chewy and delicious. I pulled a paperback book from my coat. If I had to be perched up in a tree, I might as well catch up on my reading.

My eating and other preparations for the deer hunt were suddenly interrupted by a noise. I looked down. There was a deer directly below me. How could this be? I hadn't been in the stand for 4 minutes.

The deer was too close for me to shoot, and I didn't even have my gun ready. I panicked. My only thought was to remain perfectly quiet and motionless. The deer moved away from me, so I twisted in my stand and gradually raised my gun.

The movement pushed my gloves off the deer stand and they spiraled to the ground. I watched their descent as if in slow motion, thinking that if I concentrated hard enough I could stop their fall through mental telepathy like I had seen so many times in Star Wars movies. It didn't work, and the gloves hit the ground with a noise like a bomb. Surprisingly, the deer didn't flinch or notice.

As I continued to raise the gun, I realized that I had quit breathing, and the situation was critical. The granola bar was still

stuck in my mouth.

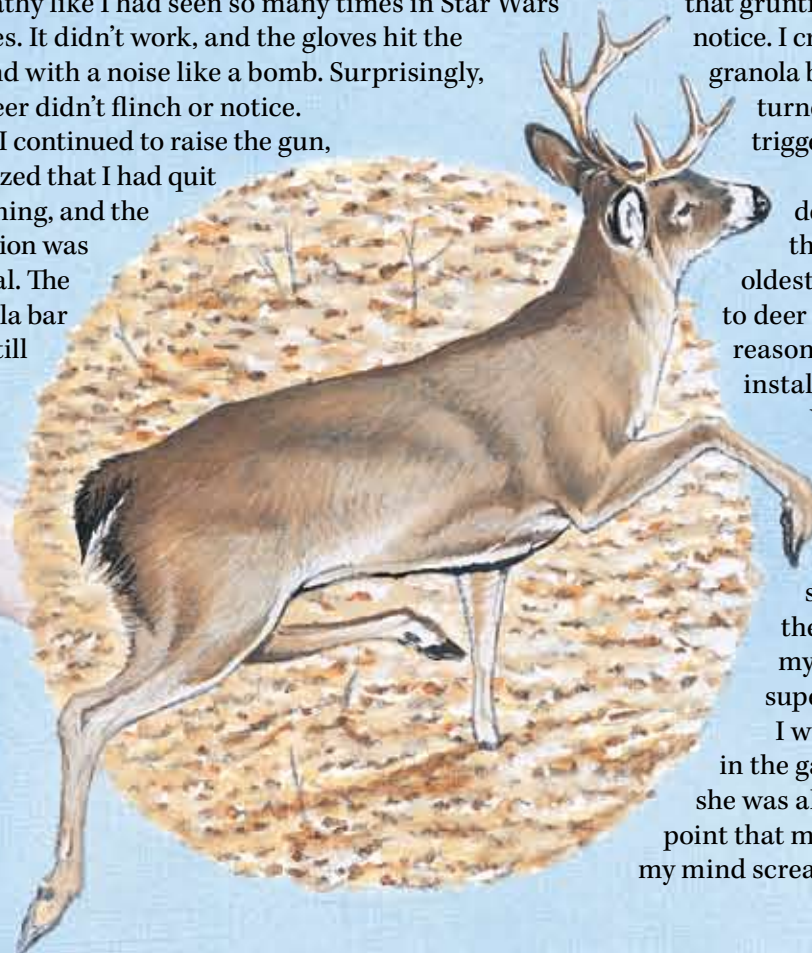
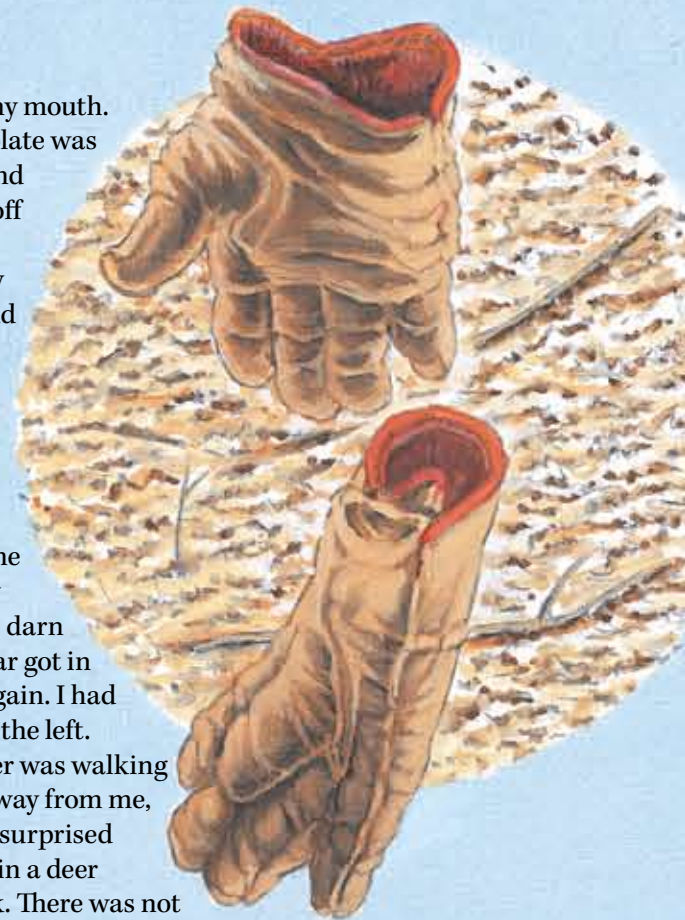
The chocolate was melting and dripping off my chin. I spread my lips around it as wide as I could and inhaled greedily. As I brought the gun to my cheek, the darn granola bar got in the way again. I had to lip it to the left.

The deer was walking directly away from me, and I was surprised by how thin a deer could look. There was not much of a target. Then I remembered someone telling me that grunting at a deer would make it stop and take notice. I croaked out a grunt as best I could with a granola bar stuck in my mouth. The deer stopped, turned sideways and looked up. I pulled the trigger and had my first Missouri deer.

I hunted deer many times after that first deer, but the memories of my first one are the most vivid. Almost 15 years later, my oldest son, Tim, decided that he would like to deer hunt. We got out my old rifle and, for reasons I can't fully explain, added a scope. I installed it myself.

We have a safe shooting area on our land in Moniteau County with a shooting bench. I had never shot a rifle with a scope, although I had been on a shooting team as a youth. On the first shot, I had my forehead much too close to the scope. The recoil drove the scope into my forehead between my eyes, leaving a superficial half-circle cut that bled profusely.

I walked back to the house. Jen, my wife, was in the garden in the back yard. I could tell that she was alarmed by my condition. It was at that point that my Little Voice popped up in the back of my mind screaming, "No, don't you dare!" But I had a



lifetime tradition of not listening to the sound counsel from my Little Voice, and I was not about to start now.

I placed my hands over my heart, dropped to my knees and bleated out, “I’ve been shot!” Then I fell face down on the grass. The last thing I remember my Little Voice saying was, “Now you’ve done it.” Jen’s reaction was predictable and everything I had hoped for, but I had not thought through the full consequences of my actions. Once she figured out that I was fooling around, she stormed inside the house and I could tell by her body language that I’d better not follow.

Fortunately, I keep my favorite chair in the garage. Here I can retire to lick my self-inflicted wounds, both physical and mental, and figure out how to recover from my poor decision making, often with help from my Little Voice.

I knew that I would have to endure a Level III lecture. As a matter of fact, it was so bad that Jen called her mother, who immediately came over to our house to give me a piece of her mind and soften me up for the main event. I was worried that my final punishment would be a lifetime shooting ban.

After a period of negotiation and groveling, Tim and I finally resumed preparations for his first deer hunt. We put up deer stands and scouted for sign. The season arrived and we poured ourselves into the hunt. I hadn’t realized how little time we would have for these outings, due to football practice, scouts, homework, and all the other activities that compete for a young person’s time.

Success eluded us. It got down to the last afternoon of the last day of the season. It was raining hard, and the temperature was in the 30s. I just did not have enough hunting passion left in me to hunt in the cold rain. Tim did.

Jen and I were in the horse barn as Tim disappeared into the fog and rain wearing a leaky blue plastic raincoat with a blaze orange vest overtop. He had more hunting drive than I did. Thirty minutes later we heard a shot. I thought, “Oh no!” and was filled with dread. The only thing worse than hunting deer in a driving rain is cleaning a deer in a driving rain. We just hoped he had missed.

Ten minutes later, Tim was back at the horse barn. He looked like the last survivor from the Titanic; there wasn’t a dry square inch on his body. I could tell by the smile on his face that he had his first Missouri deer.

The entire family put on rain gear and followed Tim into the woods. He jabbered almost incoherently about what had happened. The rain let up, fortunately, and I offered him my knife and talked him through cleaning his first deer. He did it all. We drove to the check



station together and he continuously recounted all of the details of his first deer kill. I knew that he would remember his first deer just like I had a special memory of my first Missouri deer.

Adventures in wing shooting

My first pheasant is as vivid in my memory as my first deer. I was walking through the woods in northwestern Missouri watching my feet to make sure that one foot was successfully placed in front of the other. I wasn’t even thinking about pheasants because I obviously was not in pheasant habitat.

A pheasant popped up in front of me out of nowhere—surprising me so much that I was almost paralyzed. I was able to recover enough to shoot that bird because the trees were so thick that the pheasant couldn’t make a hasty exit.

More than ten years later, I was pheasant hunting with my youngest son, Kirk. We were walking along a field border to join some other hunters. Kirk had never been pheasant hunting, so I was recounting tales of my



That bird was flushed,
shot and retrieved
before my neck quit
snapping back and
forth from the
shock and awe.

past pheasant hunting trips and embellishing (ever so slightly) my own shooting skills. Suddenly, a rooster popped up in front of us.

Kirk raised his gun instantly and shot. The bird dropped. He turned, looked at me with a big grin and said, “Dad, did you shoot?” Of course I didn’t shoot. That bird was flushed, shot and retrieved by our Lab before my neck quit snapping back and forth from the shock and awe. I realized that, at age 14, my youngest son was quicker than me and probably a better wing shot. This was a humbling experience.

As we walked on, Kirk described in detail—several times—how he had shot this first pheasant. He encouraged me to be more alert, explaining that a successful hunter was always ready. He even offered pointers on how I should carry the gun so I could react faster.

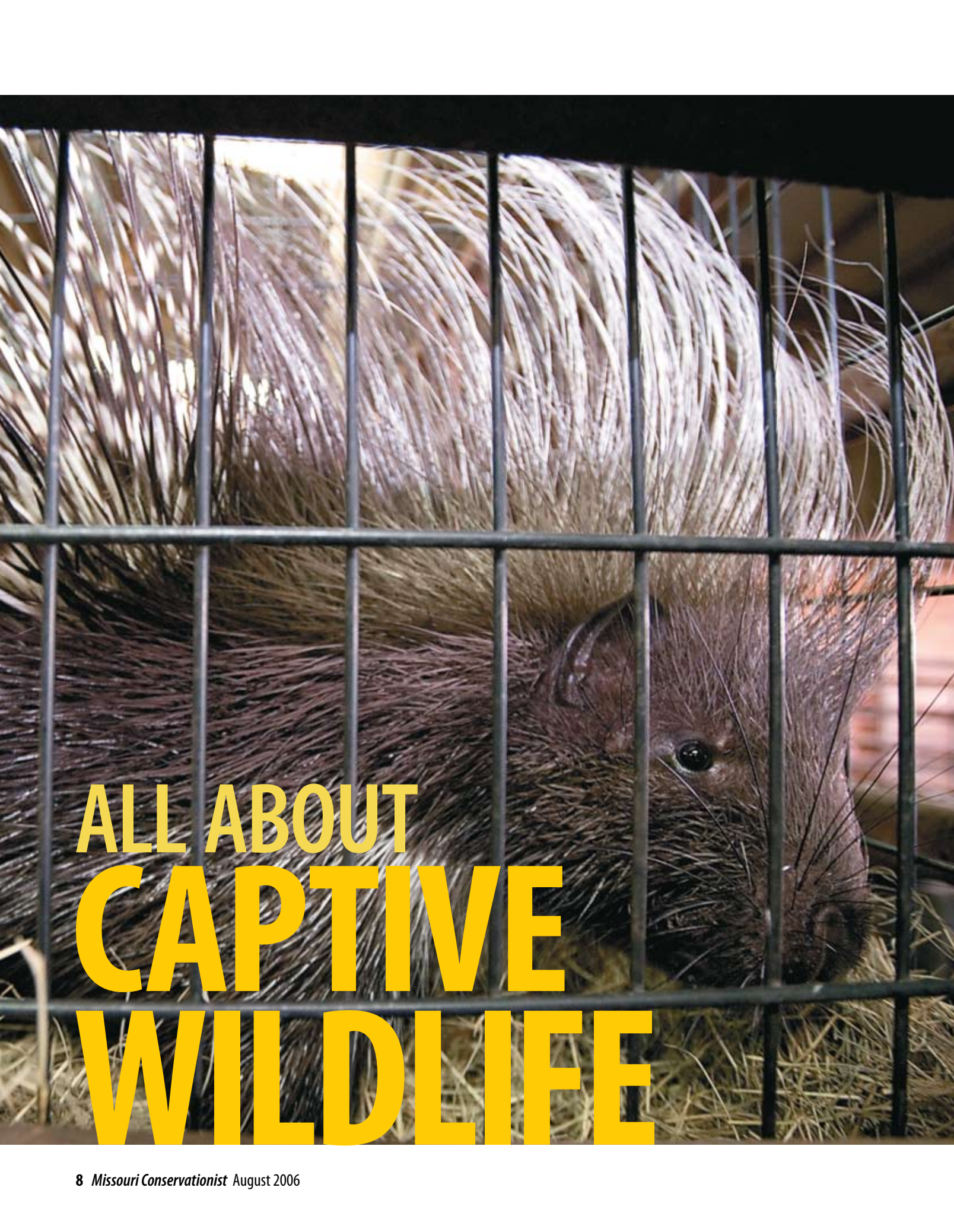
This tendency to gloat after their first kills, usually at my expense, was characteristic of all three of my sons. After Tim shot his first turkey, he just had to take me on a turkey hunt. He concluded that his hunting skills and woodsmanship obviously exceeded mine.

I accommodated his enthusiasm and we went hunting. I was the only one carrying a shotgun. He called for me and directed my every move. He did an excellent job of leading the hunt and we had a great time. I didn’t shoot a turkey that day, although I came very close, and I am kind of glad that I didn’t get one because I would never have heard the end of it.

Still more to come...

My sons are grown now and have left home to make lives for themselves. Yet we still have several firsts left to complete. Two of my sons have not shot their first turkey. None of my sons have shot a giant Canada goose from a Missouri River sandbar, despite their efforts.

I took lots of pictures of our hunting trips as my sons were growing up. I am converting these pictures to computer files and assembling them into digital slide shows. One of these slide shows I titled “Firsts” because our first kills were very memorable and special. They are the subjects of stories that we continue to retell and share with each other. ▲



ALL ABOUT CAPTIVE WILDLIFE

Know what it takes to keep captive wildlife and exotic animals safely and legally.

by Tom Skinner and Benny Pryor

As far as you can go back in history, people have been fascinated with wild and exotic animals. Ancient civilizations, including the Romans, kept exotic animals as a sign of wealth and power.

The captive wildlife and alternative livestock industries have seen unprecedented growth in the past few decades. Populations of farmed elk, deer, bison and other species have boomed across the country.

Wildlife for sale

In Missouri, organized captive wildlife sales formally began in Cape Girardeau around 1974 when Dave Hale held the Five-H Sales. In northern Missouri, the sale of exotic and captive wildlife was introduced in 1978 when Frank Lolli and his four sons began selling llamas, small caged animals, chickens, goats, mutjack deer and small furbearers at their livestock barn in Macon. Lolli Brothers has since become a leader in the industry.

In 1980, Lolli Brothers began selling white-tailed deer and elk. Over the years, their sales have expanded to include a variety of exotic animals. In an interview with Jim Lolli, he spoke of the many different species that have been auctioned over the years. Some were quite unique. Russian antelope, pygmy hippos, Congo buffaloes, parrots, all types of monkeys, and 30 to 40 different types of peacock have been offered for sale over the years.

White-tailed deer and elk have been a constant offering, but Lolli has seen a decline in these sales due to new restrictions and the threat of chronic wasting disease. He feels that the sales of deer and elk will pick back up, however, as deer breeders continue to monitor their herds for disease. Species such as camels and zebras have continued to hold their value at these sales.

Permit before purchase

Over the years, many people have gone to an auction at Lolli's, viewed the captive wildlife offered for sale and then decided to purchase some type of animal. Often, people don't consider that these cute little animals grow up to be big animals and can sometimes become a handful. Nor do they consider the high cost of care and confinement.

The Department of Conservation regulates the possession and confinement of species considered native to Missouri. Regulations help ensure animals are properly cared for and that owners understand the commitment



The Department of Conservation regulates the possession and confinement of species considered native to Missouri such as white-tailed deer but not species such as the exotic African porcupine (opposite page).

needed to keep wildlife in confinement. For certain species holding facilities must be approved before animals may be purchased. For several of these animals, certain cage size standards must be met. One of the most important things to consider when purchasing an animal is being prepared to care for that animal.

In Missouri, the Department of Conservation has six basic types of permits to hold captive wildlife. It is important to note that any wildlife held under these permits *may not* come from the wild.

The seven types of permits for holding wildlife include the Class I breeder permit, the Class II breeder permit, hobby permit, licensed shooting area permit, field trial permit, dog training permit and the hound running area permit. To obtain a permit, you must first figure out what you are going to buy and what you intend to do with it. Once you have made a decision, there is an application process to complete. Working closely with your local conservation agent is a must (see page 1 for a list of regional office phone numbers to contact an agent near you). They will help you determine what permit you will need, what cages are necessary, and if testing is required to obtain a permit.

Wildlife under permit in Missouri is broken down into two categories, Class I and Class II. Class I wildlife includes bullfrogs, green frogs and birds (including

ring-necked pheasants and gray partridges) that are native to the continental United States. Also included under the Class I permit are mammals (with the exception of bison, mountain lions, wolves and black bears or any hybrid of these species), nonvenomous reptiles, and amphibians native to Missouri. Elk that are held apart from other species are defined as livestock and are exempt from MDC permit requirements.

Class II animals also include the five poisonous snakes of Missouri: the pygmy rattlesnake, timber rattlesnake, massasauga rattlesnake, copperhead and cottonmouth. Class II wildlife includes black bear, mountain lions, wolves, or any of their hybrids. When someone decides to purchase any of these Class II animals, they must first apply for the permit and take a written test.

A permit will only be granted after a passing score of 80 percent has been obtained and the required cages are inspected. This ensures that the applicant has studied the animal that is going to be purchased and has a good idea of what is needed to take care of that animal's specific needs.

Cities, towns and counties can establish further restrictions on Class II animal ownership. In the case where prohibitions apply, no permits will be issued. If you are thinking of purchasing one of these animals, you must remember that keepers of Class II animals must register them with local law enforcement in the county where they are kept.



Confinement standards must be met to hold captive wildlife such as these pheasants.

Safe and humane keeping

When applying for a permit, your application will be forwarded to the conservation agent in the county where you reside; he or she will inspect your cages and confirm your animals are being obtained from a legal source. The conservation agents will discuss and go over the confinement standards that are required for holding animals under the permit you possess.

Whether you have decided to raise deer, bobwhite quail or pheasants, the confinement standards will apply. Confinement standards provide protection, minimize the risk of escape and ensure humane living conditions for the animals being held. Another issue that will be discussed is the records and receipts that

PERMIT TYPES

Class I Wildlife Breeder Permits allow the holder to exhibit, possess and propagate, buy and sell those animals defined as Class I wildlife. These include bullfrogs, green frogs and birds (including ring-necked pheasants and gray partridges) that are native to the continental United States. Also included under the Class I permit are mammals, with the exception of bison, mountain lions, wolves and black bears or any hybrid of these species, nonvenomous reptiles, and amphibians native to Missouri.

Class II Wildlife Breeder Permits allow the same privileges as a Class I permit but also include those animals defined as Class II wildlife. These include the five poisonous snakes of Missouri: the pygmy rattlesnake, timber rattlesnake, massasauga rattlesnake, copperhead and cottonmouth. Also included are black bear, mountain lions, wolves, or any of their hybrids.

Hobby Permits authorize the holder to purchase, possess and propagate no more than 50 ring-necked pheasants and bobwhite quail together and not more than one game mammal. Animals may be held for personal use only. Persons holding wildlife under this permit may not sell any of the animals they hold. No hoofed animals or Class II animals can be held on this permit.

Licensed Hunting Preserve Permits allow the holder to maintain and operate a licensed hunting preserve. With this permit you can purchase, propagate, hold in captivity, and sell legally acquired pheasants, exotic partridges, quail and ungulates (hoofed animals). Depending on which types of animals are held, licensed hunting preserves must follow other guidelines that are set out in detail in Missouri's *Wildlife Code*.

Field Trial Permits are used for sanctioned events, and allow you or designated shooters to shoot legally obtained quail, pheasants, chukars and mallard ducks. All of the birds must be marked with permanent avian leg bands prior to release, and captive mallards must be marked with a permanent avian leg band, removal of the hind toe from the right foot, or a web tattoo.

Dog Training Permits allow holders to tune up their bird dog before the season. Under this permit you can operate a dog-training area on no more than 40 acres and purchase legally acquired pheasants, exotic partridges and quail. Permit holders can have up to two training assistants, and all must have the appropriate hunting license.



Benny Pryor, protection district supervisor, checks the tags on animal cages to ensure compliance with the *Wildlife Code*.

must be kept concerning the animals that you are holding. Each year, permit holders will be inspected by a conservation agent to check records and to see if confinement standards are being followed. It is very important that permit holders and conservation agents have and maintain a good working relationship.

Please remember that there are several different permits that are available to purchase captive wildlife in Missouri (see sidebar on page 10). Each permit tends to be for specific animals and purposes. You must have your permit in hand for the animal you wish to purchase at an exotic or alternative sale. This preparation means that you are better prepared to handle the animal when it gets home.

Exotic animals and wildlife should never be impulse purchases. One person contacted at an exotic sale purchased two African lion cubs. African lions are not governed by the Department of Conservation, but when questioned as to the reason for the purchase the gentlemen explained that the lions were cute and fuzzy and he could not wait to see them grow up. After some discussion concerning how big they were going to get and that they could get mean, he had a change of heart

THE CAPTIVE WILDLIFE BOOM

- ▲ The North American Elk Breeders Association, founded in 1990 with 300 members, had grown to 1,400 members with 90,000 farmed elk by 1997.
- ▲ The American bison industry is reported to be growing by 30 percent each year, with more than 250,000 farmed bison in 1997, compared to 30,000 bison in 1972.
- ▲ The number of llamas in the U.S. was reported at more than 123,000 in 1999, up from 53,000 in 1992.
- ▲ In just four years, from 1992 to 1996, the estimated number of farmed deer in the U.S. grew from 44,000 to 126,000. In Missouri, well over 200 permits are currently issued to citizens who are raising white-tailed deer.

and decided against the purchase.

There are many other provisions in these permits that need to be discussed with your agent if you intend to sell or buy animals, whether native or exotic. Every person considering a purchase or possession of captive wildlife should always consult the *Wildlife Code* of Missouri for the regulations that are in place for confined wildlife. Always feel free to contact the Department if you have questions (see page 1 for a list of regional office phone numbers). ▲



A woman with glasses and a blue jacket is holding a brown snake. She is surrounded by several children, some of whom are holding books. The background shows a museum-like setting with a wooden ceiling and a window.

Meet Joe Polka

**When a volunteer naturalist is this good,
we can't help but brag about him.**

by Lynn Youngblood,
photos by Noppadol Paothong



Joe Polka points out insects to children on a guided nature walk at Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center.

Two-year-old Logan stood at the front desk of the nature center, his hands jammed deep into his pockets. “Hi, Joe,” he said, fighting his shyness.

Joe looked over his spectacles. “Hi, Logan. How are you today?” he asked. Logan’s face beamed his response. He was thrilled that Joe remembered his name, just as he always does.

That’s how many conversations start with Joe Polka at Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center. He’s been a volunteer naturalist there since 1997. The remarkable thing is that Joe has donated more than 10,000 hours of time over the past nine years to the Department of Conservation. He’s the only volunteer naturalist in the state to ever achieve this milestone.

Never too busy for friends

What’s even more amazing about Joe’s incredible dedication is that for four of those years he held down a full-time job with the Kansas City Chiefs and Kansas City Royals. He now works for them on a part-time basis as warehouse manager while continuing his volunteer hours at the nature center.

At a recent Friday Night Live special event, Joe was holding 8-month-old Cora Hartwig. She reached for the reading glasses in his pocket. “Watch out,” her father said, “She’ll break them.” “Oh, that’s okay,” Joe replied, “I have another pair in the car.” When it comes to kids, Joe’s a pushover. He’s befriended countless children during the Nature Center’s preschooler storytime, Rockin’ & Readin’ Nature Tales. The toddlers love to gather around Joe as he reads them stories of nature and wild adventures.



A volunteer for volunteers

As staff members have been promoted through the ranks and other volunteer naturalists have left the Nature Center program, Joe has remained a constant. He now helps train new volunteer naturalists. He adds whimsy and fun to the customer service training portion and has the class laughing at his do's and don'ts at the front desk. Joe attends most sessions to assist the assistant manager or guest trainer by passing out materials, running the AV equipment, getting the refreshments ready on time and whatever else it takes to help run the class efficiently. Of course, prior to the class starting, Joe has already assembled all of the class workbooks.

Man of many talents

Over the years, Joe has become an icon at Burr Oak Woods. He has helped with every project, program and special event imaginable. He gladly leads guided hikes, assists with interpretive programs or cleans out the storage room. He's just as adept at staffing the snake station during a special event as he is at serving refreshments.

Joe is also a pretty good cook. For Burr Oak Woods' Public Work Days, the staff always bring in a pot of chili, homemade soup or dessert. Joe will be in the midst of things with one of his famous chilies. For the last several years, he has also begun a tradition of making corned beef and cabbage on St. Patrick's Day. It's a staff favorite around here, and we are very thankful that he willingly shares his enthusiasm for the luck of the Irish.

Ever learning, growing and sharing

An avid reader, Joe delights in being the first to find a new field guide or wildlife book offered at the bookstore. If he finds a good one, he's been known to buy two cop-

Share your passion

The only thing more fun than doing your favorite outdoor activity is sharing your passion for it with others.

Feel the pride

Become a vital part of one of the nation's most respected conservation departments—an agency dedicated to managing Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources.

Enjoy the satisfaction

Know that your work makes a difference for Missouri's people and nature—today and for the future.

A small sampling of volunteer roles

- ▲ **Naturalist:** This position requires the highest level of commitment. As a naturalist, you will receive a comprehensive training course covering a variety of conservation topics. After graduation, your skills will be used to greet and assist visitors, lead interpretive programs and care for nature center animals and resources.
- ▲ **Instructor:** In this role, your job will be to help the Department teach people how to enjoy outdoor activities safely and successfully. Activities include hunting, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, bird watching and many others. Qualifications and training for outdoor skills instructors vary.
- ▲ **Conservationist:** As a general volunteer, you may be asked to staff the reception desk, develop programs, help maintain the facility, perform office tasks or lead a special workshop. As with other volunteer positions, general volunteers are trained and appreciated as a valuable part of the conservation workforce.

Contact your local conservation facility or visit www.missouriconservation.org/volunteer to find a volunteer opportunity that's a good match for your outdoor passion and skills. See page 1 for a list of regional phone numbers.

ies and give one to a naturalist as a thank-you for helping him load equipment or for helping him put together a program. Or, he'll donate it to the Nature Center reference library for all of the staff and volunteers to use.

Joe's home library is chock-full of books on birds, mammals, butterflies, trees, wildflowers, gardening, native plants, reptiles, amphibians, and whatever his latest interest might be. Occasionally, he'll weed through his library and bring an armload of books to the Nature Center reference library as a personal donation. The staff and volunteers continue to learn from his gifts.

At a recent Managers' Meeting held in Springfield, Missouri, this article was mentioned. The topic, of course, was Joe Polka reaching 10,000 hours of service with the Missouri Department of Conservation. All of the other nature center managers expressed their thanks and gratitude for Joe's selfless dedication. Linda Chorce, nature center manager at the Springfield



Conservation Nature Center said, “That is so cool. Isn’t it something to know about the special people like Joe, even though he’s not even at our site!”

Home away from home

Joe Polka turned 72 this year, but he has the strength and stamina of a much younger man. Perhaps giving so much of himself is what keeps him so young. There have been times when the staff has teased him because he seems to be at the nature center whenever the doors are open. But suggestions to “go home and get some rest,” go unheeded. Perhaps we’re all just selfish enough to be glad our advice is ignored.

Joe has four daughters who are spread throughout the country, but he treats the staff and other volunteers at the nature center like family. There’s no doubt that Joe gets up in the morning and thinks about what he’s going to do at Burr Oak Woods that day, and it really doesn’t matter what day of the week it is—he’ll be there.

Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center is home to many talented and giving volunteer naturalists. There is no way we could name them all and recount the many ways they make our lives easier. More importantly, there is no way we could ever touch the number of Missourians that we do without all of our volunteers. They all have their niche in the life of the nature center.



Burr Oak Woods CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER

1401 N.W. Park Road, Blue Springs, MO 64015

BUILDING HOURS

Open year 'round, Monday through Saturday, 8–5 p.m.; Sunday, noon–5 p.m.; closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

AREA HOURS

Open daily 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during daylight-saving time, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

TELEPHONE AND WEBSITE

816/228-3766; www.missouriconservation.org/areas/cnc/burroak/

We do want to offer our special thanks, however, to this one volunteer who has gone above and beyond all of the others in the state of Missouri. Joe Polka, you’ve made your mark and impacted thousands of people. We’re glad you hang your hat here. ▲



Birds of a feather...

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative makes big projects possible by drawing on the combined talents of organizations interested in conserving our rich bird life.

by Dave Erickson



JIM RATHER

B“Birds of a feather flock together,” goes the old saying. Birds of the same species may congregate for migration, feeding and protection from predators. Just as often, birds of different species, but with common interests, are found together in foraging flocks, or during migration, or to provide multiple eyes to scan for predators. The behavior of coming together to satisfy common interests also applies to organizations as they “flock together” to address joint concerns and opportunities.

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) is an example of organizational flocking behavior. MoBCI was formed in 2003 as a partnership among organizations that care about birds and those that have legal responsibilities for bird conservation. It is an organization made up of organizations; at last count, 39 groups were committed to the partnership. MoBCI includes groups as diverse as the Audubon Society of Missouri,

the National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Prairie Foundation and Ducks Unlimited.

MoBCI’s purpose is to conserve, restore and protect bird populations. Member organizations realize their interests in birds are varied, but know that these diverse interests can be channeled into a strong voice for action on behalf of birds and their habitats. Much more can be accomplished if they jointly pursue common goals. The communication among these groups also promotes appreciation of each organization’s particular interests in birds.

MoBCI is Missouri’s state-level partnership of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). Like the NABCI, the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative is about conserving birds across geopolitical boundaries, across taxonomic groups and across landscapes. Efforts are guided by key bird conserva-



Scarlet tanager

tion plans, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the Partners in Flight effort, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative and others.

Partnerships pay off

Partnerships are only as good as the dividends they yield, so what exactly has MoBCI achieved? Plenty!

Since 2003, partners have sponsored the Missouri Bird Conservation Conference each August as a forum for communication among groups and a springboard for conservation action. Keynote speakers have challenged participants' thinking and their approaches to bird habitat conservation, while project leaders have reported on conservation project successes. The 2006 MoBCI Conference will be held August 18–19, at the Holiday Inn



Least tern

JIM RATHERT

Executive Center in Columbia. Details are available from the MoBCI Web site at www.MoBCI.org.

The MoBCI Web site and newsletter promote communication on bird habitat topics. Also, a member and project directory was developed to encourage dialogue across organizational boundaries and to highlight opportunities to work together. Three Missouri Governor's proclamations have celebrated International Migratory Bird Conservation Day and the MoBCI partnership. And, a MoBCI Foundation was created to administer the group's financial activities.

Perhaps most significantly, MoBCI has served as a conduit to channel financial support to bird habitat projects in Missouri. Since 2004, more than \$400,000 has been provided to bird habitat projects through the MoBCI Grant Program. Sources of funds include the Missouri Department of Conservation (through the State Wildlife Grant Program) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program).

Birds tend to flock together when doing so is in their common interest. Now, the people behind bird conservation are doing the same thing. MoBCI assembles diverse voices speaking in unison on behalf of birds and their habitats. Meanwhile, it fosters understanding and appreciation among different organizations as they work shoulder to shoulder toward their common goal.

The 2006 MoBCI Conference will be held August 18–19, at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia. Details are available from the MoBCI Web site at www.MoBCI.org.



CLIFF WHITE

Otahki Woodland Restoration

This partnership project completed 1,200 acres of prescribed fire management for the restoration of vital glade, savanna and woodland bird habitats in the St. Francois Mountain Bird Conservation Area. The Otahki Girl Scouts were a key partner.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA BERGER

Giant Cane Restoration

A MoBCI grant contributed to this partnership, which purchased a backhoe attachment critical to planting giant cane.

Cane habitats are home to the state-endangered Swainson's Warbler, but other bird species also benefit, such as hooded warblers, indigo buntings, northern cardinals, Louisiana waterthrushes and other songbirds.



NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

Song sparrow

River Hills Forest Habitat Project

This project is an initiative to maintain 10-15 percent of a 300,000-acre area in east central Missouri as a regenerating oak-hickory forest. The site is located in a globally significant conservation site, and dense young forest and edge habitat are expected to benefit local birds such as ruffed grouse and northern bobwhite quail, as well as migratory songbirds, including American woodcock, Bell's vireo, Bewick's wren, brown thrasher, blue-winged warbler, eastern towhee, field sparrow, great-crested flycatcher, prairie warbler, white-eyed vireo and yellow-breasted chat.

Partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Audubon Society of Missouri, Missouri Department of Conservation, and most importantly, private landowners. Nearly 40 new landowners have signed up.

Current MoBCI Partners

- Academy of Science of St. Louis
- Audubon Missouri
- Audubon Society of Missouri
- Audubon Society, Chariton Valley Chapter
- Audubon Society, Columbia Chapter
- Audubon Society, Grand River Chapter
- Audubon Society, Greater Ozark Chapter
- Audubon Society, Midland Empire Chapter
- Audubon Society, St. Louis Chapter
- Conservation Federation of Missouri
- Ducks Unlimited
- Mark Twain National Forest
- Missouri Department of Conservation
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
- Missouri Department of Transportation
- Missouri Falconers Association
- Missouri Native Seed Association
- Missouri Prairie Foundation
- National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Chapter
- Ozark Center for Wildlife Research
- Ozark National Scenic Riverways
- Ozark Regional Land Trust
- Pheasants Forever
- Quail Unlimited
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- The Sierra Club, Ozark Chapter
- The Nature Conservancy, Missouri Field Office
- University of Missouri-Columbia, School of Natural Resources
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Rivers/ Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mingo National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Private Lands Office



NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

MoBCI partners, such as these members of the Audubon Society, are integral to the success of the program.

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Squaw Creek National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Swan Lake National Fish & Wildlife Refuge
- Webster Groves Nature Study Society
- Wild Birds for the 21st Century
- World Bird Sanctuary

Truman Lake Wetland Restoration

This successful project coupled the resources of several governmental agencies, private conservation groups, private corporations and several businesses with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant to restore 770 acres of marsh, bottomland hardwoods and wet prairie habitats at several sites in Henry and St. Clair counties.

Through the construction of small levees and water control structures, the project was able to use existing infrastructure (such as a pump station and pipeline purchased some years

ago from the City of Clinton) and natural water flow patterns to maximize benefits and minimize costs. At the partner recognition, Conservation Department Director John Hoskins

recognized the many partners whose contributions helped to secure a \$50,000 NAWCA grant.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MoBCI, Kansas City



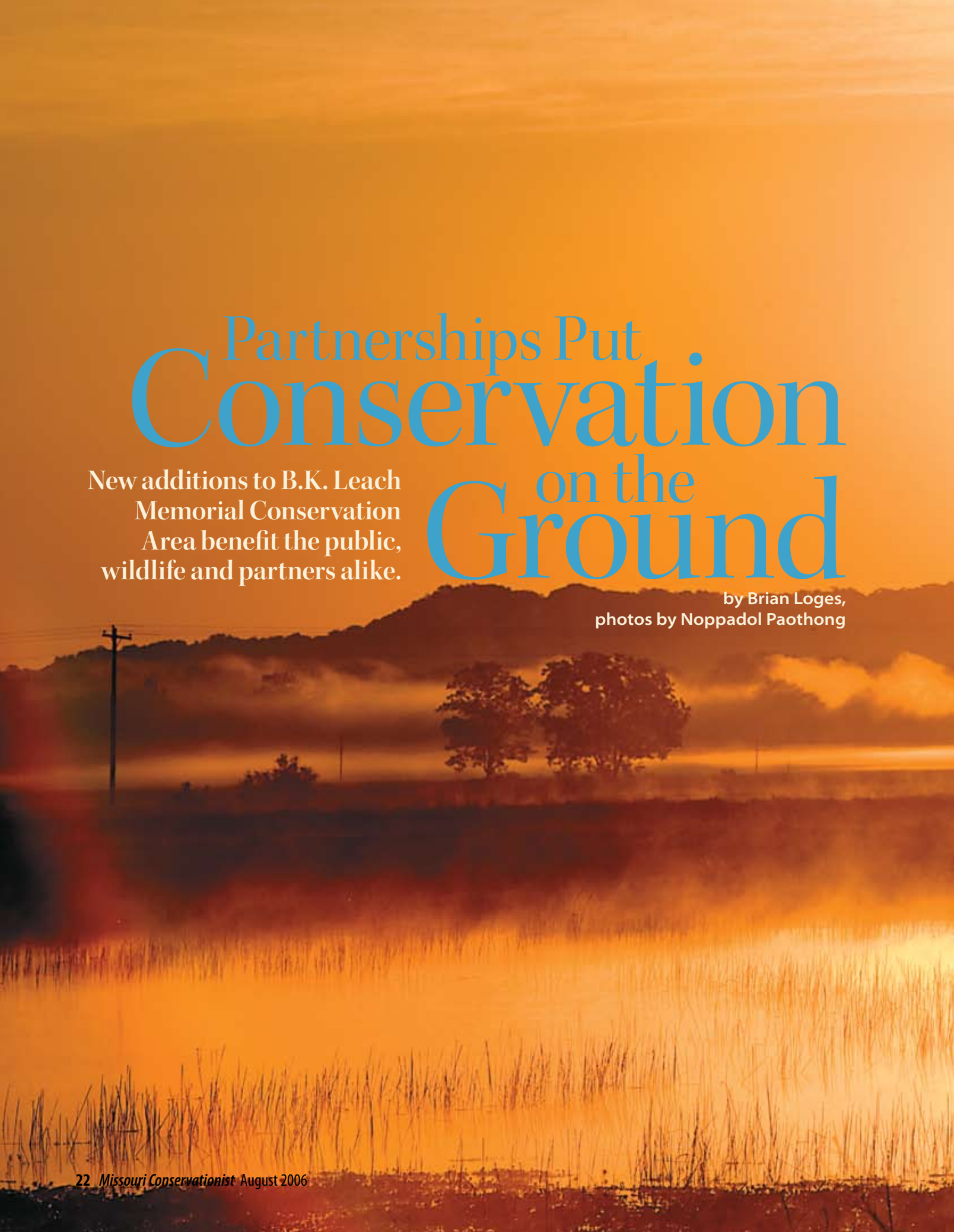
GENE GARDNER

(From left) David Erickson, Conservation Department wildlife division chief, and George Seek, Ducks Unlimited lands specialist, represent the two primary partners in the Truman Lake wetland restoration.

Power & Light Company, Sharp Brothers Seed Company, Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, Aquila (electric power provider), Agri Drain Corporation, Missouri Waterfowl Association, Audubon Society of Missouri, DBY Specialties, Forrest Keeling Nursery, Grand Slam Waterfowl and the former Women's Conservation Club were the partners that made the more than \$300,000 wetland restoration project possible. ▲



GENE GARDNER



Partnerships Put Conservation on the Ground

New additions to B.K. Leach
Memorial Conservation
Area benefit the public,
wildlife and partners alike.

by Brian Loges,
photos by Noppadol Paothong







Restoration of habitat for king rails, left, is one of several conservation goals for the new additions to B.K. Leach Conservation Area. Other species, such as great egrets, above, will also benefit from wetland restoration efforts.

Northern pintails, river otters, prairie cordgrass, blue-winged teal, king rails, mink and common snipe all have new homes or important migration stopovers thanks to recent partnerships for wetland restoration in northeast Lincoln County. Two additions to B.K. Leach Memorial Conservation Area, the Kings Lake Tract and Bittern Basin Unit, encompass more than 2,500 acres that will be restored to freshwater marsh, wet prairie and bottomland hardwoods.

Since 2001, 14 individual partner groups consisting of government agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations and one local business have been involved in the acquisition, restoration and management of the two tracts.

Not any wetland will do

The additions are significant because of their size and their rare and important habitat type: extensive seasonally flooded marshes dominated by smartweeds, rushes, wild millets and pondweeds. Before restoration, these shallow and treeless wetlands were dominated by shrub swamp and bottomland forest, which are still

relatively common along the upper Mississippi River.

Restoration of shallow, seasonally flooded marshes provides vital migration habitats for waterfowl and shorebird species on their transcontinental flights. The same areas also provide habitat for resident birds, mammals, amphibians and wetland plants. Unfortunately, restoring wetlands of this type (due to the ease in which they can be drained) is usually expensive and dependent on major infrastructure, an obstacle that makes partnerships so important for these projects.

Where we began

In 2001, the previous landowner enrolled 2,800 acres into the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), a federal program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture. This program uses easements to restore former wetland areas on private land. Following the enrollment, a group of conservation partners applied for and received a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant to acquire the two tracts.

NAWCA, passed in 1989 and governed by partnerships, allows the federal government to provide matching funds to partnerships with the common goal of

wetland conservation. Partners in the NAWCA project included the Natural Resources Conservation Service (United States Department of Agriculture), United



Woody swamp dominates the original B.K. Leach tracts.

States Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Conservation, The American Land Conservancy, Mary E. Leach Trust, Ducks Unlimited, Waterfowl USA (currently MO Waterfowl Association), and Forrest Keeling Nursery.

The acquisition of the property was an impressive example of the effectiveness of partnerships, and the actual restoration and management of the land required still more partners. The NRCS funded efforts to build the levees and structures necessary to make former wetlands wet again.

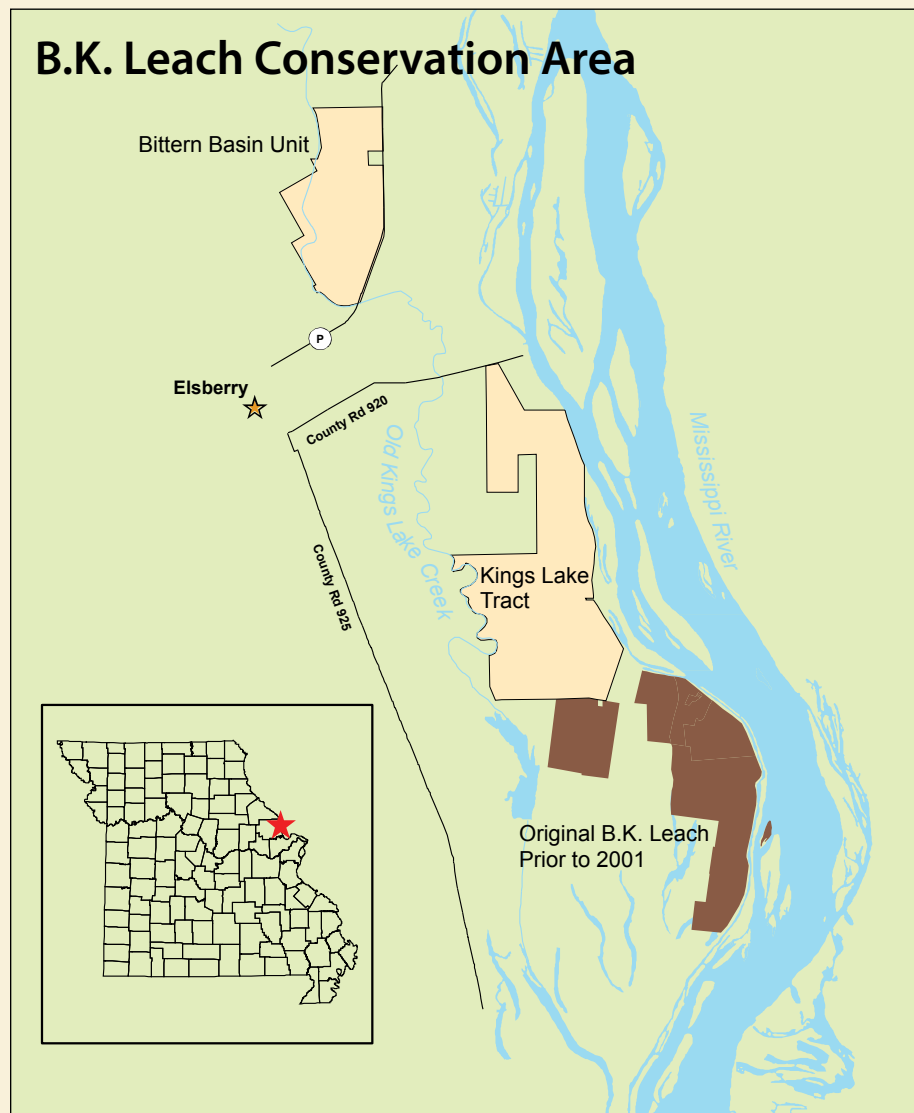
Certain restrictions have been placed on the property to secure the WRP easement, and some of these restrict public use by limiting the development of access roads and other facilities. However, it is important to note that the WRP enrollment was the impetus that allowed the entire project to proceed in 2001. Without WRP, the acquisition would have stalled

and most likely would not have occurred.

Partner projects

Several other projects concurrent with the area's development were completed using partnership organizations:

- Ducks Unlimited contributed major funding for a well on the Bittern Basin Unit through their marsh grant program. The well is critical for providing flooded habitats in the fall. It is also used to supplement water levels at other times of the year.
- The St. Louis Audubon Society contributed many hours of birding expertise while assisting with a marsh bird survey on the Bittern Basin Unit in 2005 and 2006. The survey documented breeding season use of the wetland pools in just the second year by king rails, least bitterns, sora rails, and pied-billed grebes. Uncommon breeding birds in Missouri, king rails and least bitterns are facing major declines throughout most of their range.
- Researchers from the University of Arkansas and Louisiana State University USGS Cooperative Wildlife Research Units are using





the newly created wetlands as a key site for a study of king rail distribution in the lower Mississippi Flyway.

- The Elsberry FFA chapter has expanded their volunteer effort in wood duck banding to sites on the new additions. A favorite activity of many of the students, it is also the first exposure to conservation that many of the students receive.
- The Mississippi Valley Duck Hunters Association also purchased a boat blind for public waterfowl hunter use.

Due to the efforts of a wide variety of partner agencies and organizations, duck hunters have new pools to ply with layout boats; king rails have an abundance of new nesting habitat; birders have a new destination for spotting the vagrant sandhill crane, black-necked stilt, or glossy ibis; mallards, pintail, gadwall, teal, and at least a dozen other duck species, have a new destination during fall flights and an equally important stopover on the spring



Members of the St. Louis Chapter of the Audubon Society conduct a marsh bird survey, above, on the new additions to B.K. Leach. Members play birdcalls to get responses from targeted species. These new tracts will be restored to a variety of marsh habitats, top, to benefit a variety of wetland wildlife.

return. Although the restoration is still in its infancy, the response of wetland-dependent species and the continued involvement of outside partner groups will be worth watching. ▲



State Fair offerings

Visitors to the Conservation Department exhibit at the 2006 Missouri State Fair (August 10–20) will find a wealth of information about creating wildlife habitat and bringing conservation home. The Conservation Department's area at the south end of the fairgrounds continues to have the ever-popular aquariums with native fish, turtles and amphibians, plus displays of live snakes. Youngsters can spend time in the hands-on Discovery Room. The room also is a hit with adults who attend naturalist programs there in air-conditioned comfort. The Operation Game Thief trailer returns with displays of trophies and items confiscated from poachers and information about how to stop poaching close to home. If fishing is your thing, check out one of the Mobile Aquarium programs offered at 1, 4 and 6 p.m. daily.

ZEBRA MUSSELS

The discovery of zebra mussels in Lake of the Ozarks in June makes it more important than ever for Missouri anglers and boaters to exercise caution so as not to spread the invasive pest. Boaters should:

- Drain the bilge water and live wells of boats before leaving one body of water to go to another.
- Inspect their boats and trailers and remove any zebra mussels they find.
- Dry boats and trailers for one week before entering another waterway, or
- Wash boats and trailers with 104 degree water, a 10 percent chlorine and water solution, or a hot saltwater solution, and then rinse with clean water if the rinse water will not run into lakes or streams.
- Anglers should empty and dry out bait buckets between uses in different lakes or streams and never transfer bait or fish from one water body to another. Dumping bait is not just irresponsible, it is illegal in Missouri.

Zebra mussels pose a serious ecological and economic threat to Missouri. All citizens need to take an active role in preventing further spread. For more information on zebra mussels, visit www.missouriconservation.org/nathis/exotic/zebra/. To report possible zebra mussel sightings, call the nearest

Trail Summit set for Nov. 2–4

The 2006 Missouri Trail Summit will be Nov. 2 through 4 at the Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center in Kansas City. This is the third year for the forum to learn about and promote trail planning, construction, management and use. Join representatives from federal, state, local agencies and organizations and volunteers and trail advocacy groups. Attendees can choose from sessions and workshops dealing with trail surfaces, maintenance, river crossings, volunteer partnerships, trail grants and much more. Visit www.mopark.org/MissouriTrailSummit.htm or contact Teresa Kight, Teresa.Kight@mdc.mo.gov, 573/522-4115, ext. 3636, for more information.

Web site connects birding partners worldwide

Birdwatching enthusiasts who have a yen for travel but don't want to waste precious time looking for the best birding spots have a new friend—potentially thousands of friends—at www.birdingpal.org. The idea is simple, enabling people to swap guide services in their home area for return favors in other locales. The site lets users “select a continent to find a local birder to go birding with.” Success varies. Some users find good contacts the first time. Others report difficulties in making connections. Approximately 60 percent of Birdingpal participants are from North America. The remainder live in 126 countries.

Conservation Department office (see page 1 for a list of regional office phone numbers) or contact Brian Canaday, 573/522-4115 ext. 3371, Brian.Canaday@mdc.mo.gov, P.O. Box 180. Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180.





DU honors Missouri

Ducks Unlimited (DU), the world's largest and most successful citizen waterfowl conservation group, recently honored the Missouri Conservation Commission for its long-term support for habitat restoration to benefit ducks, geese and other wetland wildlife. Present at the ceremony were, from left, Conservation Commission Vice Chairman Steve Bradford, DU State Council Chairman George Thomlinson, Commission Chairman Lowell Mohler, DU State Chairman Jim Talbert, Commission Secretary Cynthia Metcalfe, Commissioner Chip McGeehan, DU Southern Regional Office Director Ken Babcock and DU Director of Public Policy Ross Melinchuk.

2006 RECORD FISH

A bullhead catfish caught south of Kansas City over the Memorial Day weekend might not look impressive to anglers who specialize in the larger members of the catfish tribe, but among bullheads this one is a behemoth. It raises



Missouri's state-record mark significantly and far outweighs the current national and international records.

John Irvin of Drexel landed the 6-pound, 6-ounce yellow bullhead using minnows and 6-pound-test line. The previous Missouri pole-line-and-lure record, set at a Blue Springs farm pond in 1986, weighed just 5 pounds, 13 ounces.

The International Game Fish Association (IGFA) in Diana Beach, Fla., counts a 4-pound, 4-ounce fish caught in Arizona as its all-tackle record, and the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward, Wisc., recognizes a 4-pound, 15-ounce fish from Georgia as the high-water mark for yellow bullheads.

For more information about Missouri fishing records and how to apply for a record, visit www.missouriconservation.org/fish/ and click on "Fishing." Next, click on "Fish and Fishing," and then click on "Fishing records—pole and line."

Arbor Day poster contest winner

Trevor Klump, a fifth-grade student at Valle Catholic School in Ste. Genevieve, is the winner of Missouri's 2006 Arbor Day National Poster Contest. Klump's poster was selected from more than 1,900 entries from 58 schools. He was honored during a tree planting ceremony on the school grounds on April 6 and received a \$50 savings bond. His teacher, Linda Kertz, received a Trees Are Terrific Curriculum Kit and other prizes. State Arbor Day Poster Contest winners



go on to the national competition. The national winner receives a \$1,000 savings bond and a trip to National Arbor Day Headquarters in Nebraska City, Neb. Visit www.arborday.org for more information about the contest and the foundation.

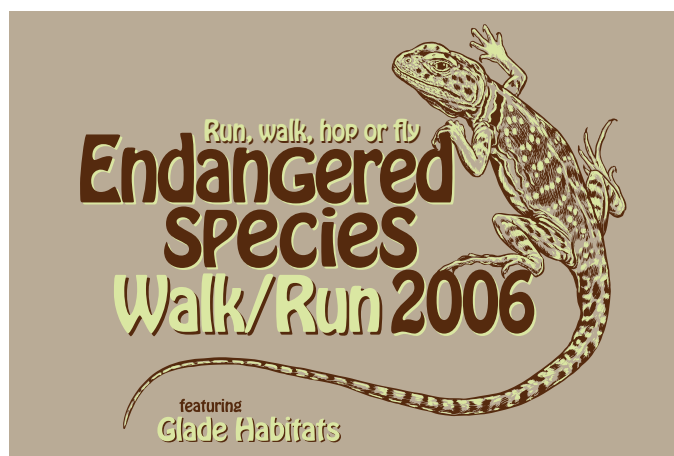
2006 Endangered Species Walk/Run

Mark your calendars for the Endangered Species Walk/Run October 7 in Jefferson City. Join hundreds of other walkers and runners from throughout Missouri to participate in this event that will raise funds to help restore habitat, conduct research, and support education projects for endangered animals and plants in Missouri. This seventh annual event is co-hosted by the Department of Conservation, Department of Natural Resources, and Jefferson City Parks, Recreation and Forestry. The race route is mostly on the scenic Katy Trail.

This year's theme is protecting glade species and habitat. Some of the rare species typically found on Missouri's glades include collared lizards, road runners, scorpions... and even tarantulas! The Missouri bladderpod and the miniscule geocarpon—glade plants—are both federally listed as threatened.

New this year is a Button Contest and Children's Team registration. Children age 18 and under can submit artwork featuring a glade species. All artwork will be made into 2" diameter pin-buttons, and race participants will vote on their favorite. Also, teams of children can enter at a reduced rate (\$10/team) and team photos will be taken the day of the race.

The \$20 registration fee includes a long-sleeved colored T-shirt with original artwork. For more information, or to register or order a T-shirt, visit www.missouriconservation.org/programs/es_walkrun/ or contact Donna Linnenbrink, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, 65102-0180, 573/522-4115, ext. 3237.





Habitat Hint: Four tips for better brush piles

All brush piles are not created equal. Keep the following tips in mind when making brush piles for quail, rabbits and other ground-nesting wildlife.

- 1) Get rid of grass first. Brush piles are most beneficial when the ground beneath them is open, not choked with grass sod. Kill grass with herbicide before starting brush piles.
- 2) Don't pile brush. In spite of their name, brush "piles" are most beneficial to rabbits and quail when they are low to the ground not piled high. Use the "chop-and-drop" technique, leaving trees where they fall.
- 3) Leave the heavy stuff. Resist the temptation to cut the limbs off main trunks and use them for posts or firewood. These heavy pieces of brush keep pile structure open and prevent rapid deterioration.
- 4) Do a little every year. Brush piles have limited life spans. If you create 50 this year and burn yourself out, you will have no brush piles several years later. Creating a few brush piles each year provides the variety of habitat that quail and rabbits need and ensures a continuous supply of escape cover.

MISSOURI'S BIRD FLU RISK FROM WILD BIRDS VERY LOW

The risk of avian influenza, commonly called bird flu, reaching Missouri via wild birds is extremely small this year. For the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus to get to Missouri through wild channels, ducks or other migratory birds would have to come in contact with birds from Asia. Very few birds that migrate through Missouri spend the summer in areas that Asian birds also visit.

State and federal authorities are focusing avian flu monitoring efforts on Alaska and the Pacific Flyway, where birds at highest risk are found. However, wildlife officials are working to ensure that the virus is detected early if an infected bird does reach the Show-Me State.

The Conservation Department is involved in national wild-bird monitoring. It took samples from 300 hunter-killed ducks at conservation areas last fall. This year's monitoring will be part of the national effort. The Department will continue its normal practice of investigating reports of large numbers of dead or sick birds.

International travel by infected people and smuggling of birds are more likely ways for H5N1 to enter the United States. Details of the national bird flu monitoring effort are available at www.nwhc.usgs.gov. For answers to commonly asked questions about bird flu, visit www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/wtrfowl/birdflu.htm.

Final Lewis & Clark bicentennial events

September marks the end of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial, culminating in the final national event to be held Sept. 20 through 24 on the St. Louis Riverfront. Details of this and other bicentennial events in Missouri are available at www.lewisandclark.mo.gov/asp/default.asp or by contacting the Missouri Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission, P.O. Box 176, 100 Jefferson St. Lohman Building, Suite 200, Jefferson City 65102, 573/522-9019

Deer seasons set

Mark your calendars for deer season. This year's dates are:

FIREARMS DEER

- Urban Portion: Oct. 6–9
- Youth Portion: Oct. 28–29
- November Portion: Nov. 11–21
- Muzzleloader Portion: Nov. 24–Dec. 3
- Antlerless Portion: Dec. 9–17

ARCHERY DEER AND TURKEY

- Deer: Sept. 15–Nov. 10 and Nov. 22–Jan. 15

For permit availability, antler restrictions and counties open during the urban hunt, consult the 2006 Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet, available from hunting permit vendors statewide.





FIELD TRIP GRANTS AVAILABLE

In its continuing support of education, the Conservation Department again is offering grants to help schools maintain curriculum quality. The grants enable schools to take students in grades K through 12 to conservation areas and other sites where they can see real-world examples of biology lessons and other conservation-related topics. Last year, the Conservation Field Trip Grant Program awarded almost \$91,000 in field-trip grants to 271 schools.

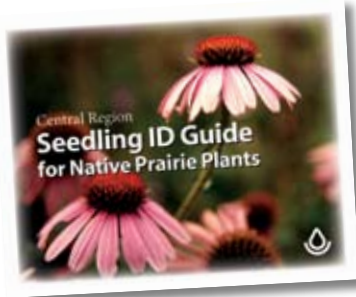
Any Missouri school—public, private, parochial or home—may apply. Approved schools receive reimbursement for actual transportation expenses up to the amount awarded after submitting receipts for reimbursement, along with narratives describing trip accomplishments and benefits.

The 2006-2007 grant guidelines and applications will be sent to schools this month. Application information also is available from Conservation Department education staff, regional offices or at www.missouriconservation.org. Click on keywords "Education" and then "Conservation Field Trip Grant." Applications will be accepted from Sept. 1 through March 1. Grants will be awarded on a first-requested, first-awarded basis to eligible applications.

New book helps identify prairie plant seedlings

The Nature Shop has a new book for people who want to identify prairie plants before they grow tall. The Central Region Seedling ID Guide for Native Prairie Plants (Item No. 01-0290) is spiral bound and has color photos and basic information about 40 commonly seeded native prairie grasses and wildflowers. It is especially helpful for prairie establishment or restoration projects. The price is \$6 plus shipping and handling and sales tax, where applicable.

Also new at The Nature Shop are New Leaf Image note cards (Item No. 01-0315). At 10 cards and envelopes for \$4.50 plus shipping, handling and sales tax, this is quite a bargain.



Wild Edibles of Missouri (item No. 01-0071), which has been out of print, now is back in stock for \$12 plus shipping, handling and sales tax. This is the last printing, so order now.

To order these or other items, visit www.mdcnatureshop.com or call toll-free 877/521-8632.

Commission changes duck zone boundaries and sets early migratory bird seasons

At its June meeting, the Conservation Commission made one change to duck hunting zone boundaries and set early migratory bird seasons.

The three-zone structure for Missouri's duck season remains unchanged except that I-70 now is the North/Middle zone boundary from the junction of Highway 47 west to the Kansas border. This shifts Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area into the Middle Zone. Further details are available at www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/wtrfowl/zones/index.htm.

Also at the June meeting, the Commission set early migratory bird hunting seasons:

- Sora and Virginia Rails: Sept. 1–Nov. 9.
- Common snipe: Sept. 1–Dec. 16.
- American woodcock: Oct. 15–Nov. 28.
- Mourning dove, Eurasian collared doves and white-winged doves: Sept. 1–Nov. 9.
- Teal: Sept. 9–24.



Duck into Web site for waterfowl reservations

Waterfowl hunters can apply for reservations at Missouri's 14 managed wetland areas 24 hours a day, seven days a week from Sept. 1 through Sept. 18 by calling 800/829-2956 or via the internet at www.missouriconservation.org. You can apply for anyone in your immediate household. However, the reservation holder must be present at the draw for the reservation to be valid. Results of the drawing will be available at the same phone number and Web site beginning Oct. 2. To make reservations or check results you will need your nine-digit conservation ID number, which is found on the top of your hunting permit or on the back of your Heritage Card next to the bar code.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting

	open	close
Common Snipe	9/1/06	12/16/06
Coyotes	5/15/06	3/31/07
Crow	11/1/06	3/3/07
Deer		
Archery	9/15/06	11/10/06
	11/22/06	1/15/07
Urban Counties (antlerless only)	10/6/06	10/9/06
Youth	10/28/06	10/29/06
November	11/11/06	11/21/06
Muzzleloader	11/24/06	12/3/06
Antlerless	12/9/06	12/17/06
Dove	9/1/06	11/9/06
Furbearers	11/15/06	2/15/07
Groundhog	5/15/06	12/15/06
Pheasant		
North Zone	11/1/06	1/15/07
South Zone	12/1/06	12/12/06
Quail	11/1/06	1/15/07
Rabbits	10/1/06	2/15/07
Ruffed Grouse	10/15/06	1/15/07
Sora and Virginia Rails	9/1/06	11/9/06
Squirrels	5/27/06	2/15/07
Teal	9/9/06	9/24/06
Turkey, Archery	9/15/06	11/10/06
	11/22/06	1/15/07
Turkey Fall Firearms	10/1/06	10/31/06
Woodcock	10/15/06	11/28/06

Fishing

Black Bass (certain Ozark streams, see the Wildlife Code)	5/27/06	2/28/07
impoundments and other streams year round		
Bullfrog	sunset	midnight
	6/30/06	10/31/06
Gigging nongame fish	9/15/06	1/31/07
Trout Parks	3/1/06	10/31/06

Trapping

Beaver	11/15/06	3/31/07
Furbearers	11/15/06	2/15/07
Otters & Muskrats	11/15/06	see Wildlife Code

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of "Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations" and "Missouri Fishing Regulations," the "Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information," the "Waterfowl Hunting Digest" and the "Migratory Bird Hunting Digest." This information is on our Web site at www.MissouriConservation.org/regs/ and at permit vendors.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/.

AGENT NOTEBOOK

In my job duties, I often work with

volunteers who help provide quality outdoor experiences for people with disabilities. I'm always impressed with the dedication, patience and creativity shown by the volunteers, as well as the participants.

All Missourians should have the opportunity to learn about and use Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources. Sometimes it just takes a little initiative by the right people to make it happen.

Organized events like the National Wild Turkey Federation Wheelin' Sportsmen's Day at the Range program, many managed deer and turkey hunts, and the Outdoor Skills Camp for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children are just a few examples where volunteers can help. With a little searching you can find a variety of other opportunities to help people with disabilities enjoy the outdoors.

Including a disabled person in your next fishing trip, nature hike or hunting adventure can make a lifetime memory for everyone involved. I guarantee you that a child with a visual impairment feels as big a thrill as any other child when he or she gets to tag along on a deer hunt.

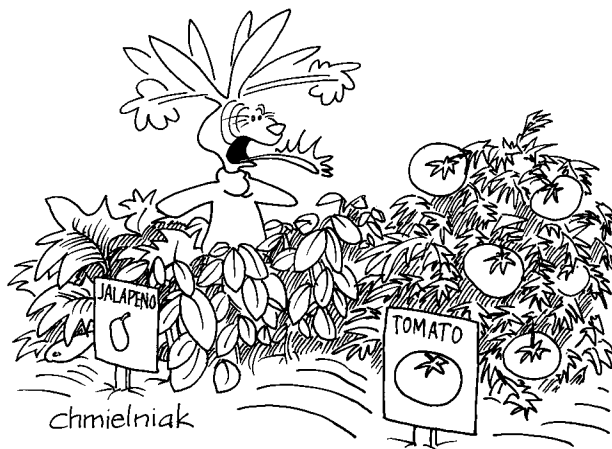
Hunting, fishing and other outdoor traditions are meant to be shared by everyone. I encourage you to do what you can to help all Missourians learn about and use our fish, forest and wildlife resources, regardless of their abilities. —Randy Doman, Dade County

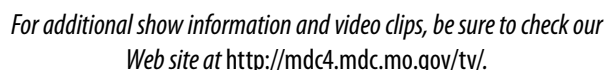


To learn about bobwhite quail management and Missouri's quail recovery efforts, check out

www.missouriconservation.org

Keyword: quail





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St. Louis City TV 10
St. Peters St. Peters Cable
Springfield MediaCom
Sullivan Fidelity Cable
West Plains OCTV



Crabby crayfish

Crayfish, sometimes called crawdads or mudbugs, are excellent bait. Anglers should be careful to release unused crayfish in the same body of water from which they were taken.—*Noppadol Paothong*



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Missouri households